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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 7121
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0195
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/21/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: KIM DAE-JUNG POSTPONES PYONGYANG TRIP TO JUNE

REF: SEOUL 383

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Former President Kim Dae-jung indicated over the weekend that he will delay until June his proposed visit to Pyongyang. As reported REFTEL, Kim had hoped to travel from Seoul to Pyongyang and back by rail in April. The delay comes in response to charges from the opposition parties, including Kim's own Democratic Party (DP), that a visit in April would have significant impact on the May 31 nation-wide local elections. In announcing the postponement, Kim's spokesman specifically cited the former president's desire to not to intrude on the domestic political scene. Kim also concluded that a June visit would enable him to avoid the potential awkwardness of being asked to participate in festivities related to Kim Il-Sung's birthday (April 15). June also marks the sixth anniversary of the historic 2000 North-South summit in Pyongyang.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: For the time being, the announcement of a postponement appears moot as the DPRK has yet to respond to Kim's proposed visit. A senior aide to Kim told us February 21 that a response from Pyongyang is not likely to come until after ongoing celebrations in honor of Kim Jong-il's birthday wind down, perhaps toward the end of the month.

¶3. (C) CONT'D COMMENT: The prospect of a visit to Pyongyang by Kim Dae-jung continues to have reverberations on the domestic political scene, as most analysts assume that the euphoria generated by such a visit would mostly benefit the pro-engagement ruling Uri Party. This speaks to the inextricable link between North-South relations and Korean domestic politics -- and Kim Dae-jung's enduring influence on both. END COMMENT.
VERSHBOW